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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BUCHAREST 001270

SIPDIS

STATE DEPT FOR EUR/NCE - WILLIAM SILKWORTH

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SUBJECT: ROMANIA EXPRESSES CONCERNS ABOUT RESURGENT BLACK SEA HARMONY/BLACKSEAFOR - SEEKS U.S. VIEWS

REF: A. STATE 90931

[B](#). STATE 90564

[C](#). BUCHAREST IIR 6 883 0153 05 (AND PREVIOUS)

[D](#). BUCHAREST 477

[E](#). BUCHAREST 1174

Classified By: Classified by Political Section Chief Robert S. Gilchrist for Reasons 1.4 A, B, and D.

[1](#)1. (U) This is an Action Request for the State Department. See Paragraph 10.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary. GOR interlocutors who handle Black Sea issues express appreciation for U.S. views on Romania's possible contributions to the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and the Romania-organized Black Sea Border Security Initiative (BSBSI). Romanian contacts are alarmed, however, at the recent decision of the Russian Federation, Bulgaria and Georgia to join as permanent members the Turkish-led Operation Black Sea Harmony, to be renamed BLACKSEAFOR. They also flagged surprising Turkish assertions that the new arrangements have USG approval. The GOR urgently seeks guidance about U.S. views on Russian and Turkish joint efforts to dominate Black Sea maritime security and exclude non-littoral state actors from playing a role. End Summary.

[1](#)3. (C) Naval Attache and PolOff discussed Black Sea regional security issues, including Romanian interest in increased involvement in operational activities of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and the Romania-organized Black Sea Border Security Initiative (BSBSI), May 23 with MFA NATO Division Director Mirela Maghiar, MFA Arms Control and NonProliferation Division Director Dan Neculaescu and MOD Counselor and assistant to Acting presidential security adviser General Constantin Degeratu, Iulia Ionescu (Refs A and B). GOR interlocutors expressed gratitude for an opportunity to discuss both the PSI and BSBSI, noting that the GOR will participate in the Czech-led PSI exercise and underscoring Romania's abiding commitment to PSI goals. MFA NATO Director Maghiar observed that our nonpaper (Ref B) underscores a concept which the GOR supports - that PSI and BSBSI are "mutually reinforcing." They also expressed a commitment to "working together" to achieve a "complementary" relationship between PSI and BSBSI.

[1](#)4. (C) During the course of discussions, however, the Romanians provided a somber assessment of the May 17-18 meeting of the Chiefs of the Black Sea Navies (Russian Federation, Turkey, Bulgaria, Georgia and Romania). They expressed dismay at the decision - apparently agreed on by the Russians, Turks, Bulgarians, and Georgians in advance of the plenary meeting of naval commanders - to join as permanent members the Turkish-led Operation Black Sea Harmony, establishing a permanent "operations center" in Turkey (Ref C). The Romanians stated that the Turks (and Russians) had stressed that the purpose of Operation Black Sea Harmony will be to assure security in the Black Sea.

[1](#)5. (C) From the Romanian perspective, the coup de grace of this unexpected and unwanted outcome was the Turkish announcement that to "avoid confusion" and to obviate the need for formal approval to join a new organization, Operation Black Sea Harmony should be called BLACKSEAFOR. The Romanians told us that they are opposed to BLACKSEAFOR "taking over" Operation Black Sea Harmony but at the same time the GOR does not want to "upset the Turks." The Romanian interlocutors stressed that the proposed morphing of Black Sea Harmony into BLACKSEAFOR would not happen immediately as "more meetings need to occur at a working level and at the experts' level," with the first working group set for June 1-2 in Istanbul. They also expressed the hope that even if an expanded BLACKSEAFOR comes into being it could still be

possible "to leave things open for a future NATO role." (Note: Romania participates in BLACKSEAFOR but characterizes the Russian-dominated organization as fundamentally a regional confidence building measure that should focus on activities such as search and rescue exercises but should not expand its mandate to serving as a guarantor of maritime security. (Ref D) End Note.)

16. (C) Our Romanian interlocutors stressed that during the May 17-18 meeting the Russian representatives iterated that non-littoral states should play no role in maintaining maritime security and that an Active Endeavor-like operation has no place in the Black Sea - a view the Russians have previously asserted. MOD Counselor Ionescu noted that during both the May 17-18 meeting as well as during previous encounters, the Turks have unrealistically "downplayed asymmetric threats" in the Black Sea region, insisting that littoral states could and should exclusively guarantee Black Sea security. The GOR interlocutors insisted that threats in the Black Sea region, including trafficking in conventional arms, are "real and extensive" and cannot be adequately addressed exclusively by littoral states.

17. (C) More troubling - and surprising - from the Romanian perspective was the Turks' assertion during the meeting that the expansion of Operation Black Sea Harmony to include all littoral states with the aim of guaranteeing maritime security, together with its morphing into BLACKSEAFOR, enjoys the support of the USG. According to the Romanians, the Turks averred that an American admiral in a previous meeting had stated he "admired" Turkey's "vision" for the Black Sea.

18. (C) MFA NATO Director Maghiar stressed that "it is very important for us to know what the U.S. position is" regarding the proposed expansion of Black Sea Harmony. "Does the U.S. indeed endorse the Turkish 'vision' for the Black Sea?" asked Maghiar. The Romanian interlocutors expressed a need for "some clarification from the U.S." and underscored the GOR's strong preference that "transatlantic institutions" (read: NATO, with U.S. leadership) guarantee Black Sea security.

19. (C) Comment: Dead in the water, at least for now, is the Romanian proposal to create a Black Sea Task Force (Ref D), given the Turkish and Russian commitment to steam ahead with plans to "operationalize" Black Sea Harmony under the aegis of BLACKSEAFOR. While the Romanians are evidently peeved at this development, they have made it clear to us on previous occasions that the GOR has no intention of being the odd man out on Black Sea security issues -- especially given the GOR's apparent belief that Romania could cooperate with its littoral neighbors on regional security initiatives and still "leave things open for a future NATO role." Senior GOR officials have recently reaffirmed strong support for a U.S. military facilities presence on Romanian soil (Ref E), which they equate with a boost in Black Sea regional security. Romanian officials have also expressed gratitude for U.S. "backing" during the May 10 joint meeting at NATO Headquarters of the Political-Military Steering Committee on Partnership for Peace and the Political Committee. In addition, MFA interlocutors expressed gratitude for State Department representation May 27-28 at the BSBSI Planning Conference in Bucharest for the "Styx 2005" exercise. During our May 23 meeting with the Romanians, however, they appeared genuinely concerned that the U.S. may have endorsed the Turkish maritime security "vision" - leaving Romania's oft-enunciated goal of a region "anchored to trans-Atlantic institutions" high and dry.

110. (C) Action Request for State Department: Post would appreciate any guidance and feedback we can share with the Romanians regarding plans to significantly expand the scope of Operation Black Sea Harmony under the rubric of BLACKSEAFOR.

111. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNet website: www.state.gov/p/eur/bucharest

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